

Labor

Our nation has long recognized the rights of workers to organize and bargain collectively for wages, benefits, and working conditions. Many of the conditions we take for granted today - the five day work week, overtime pay, retirement, health insurance, and paid vacation came about as a direct result of long and difficult negotiations by organized workers. So too, the middle class of this country has grown because average working families could earn decent wages that let them own a home, send their kids to college, and build a better life.

I believe it is important to preserve these fundamental rights and ensure that the people who work hard, play by the rules, and help build this country continue to share in its prosperity. To that end, we must also insist in our trade with other nations that we respect these basic rights and not encourage domestic industries to move overseas to avoid use laws or dodge paying their fair share of taxes.

Supporting the Right of Workers to Organize

Congressman Baird has long supported the right of workers to organize and form a union. That is why he is a cosponsor of the Employee Free Choice Act. This important legislation would strengthen protections for workers' who choose to unionize by requiring employers to recognize a union after a majority of workers sign cards authorizing union representation. The bill also establishes requirements for reaching an initial collective bargaining agreement following certification and adds two important remedies for violations committed by employers including back pay and additional civil penalties. This important legislation passed the House in March of 2007.

Banning Sweatshop Imports

Congressman Baird believes that we need to do more to protect American jobs by curtailing the trade of sweatshop goods. That is why he is a cosponsor of the Decent Working Conditions and Fair Competition Act. This legislation would ban the importation or sale of products made in factories under sweatshop conditions.

Protecting Prevailing Wages

The Davis Bacon Act was designed to outlaw wage exploitation in public construction contracts by preventing the undercutting of local standards. Because public works contracts go to the lowest bidder, lawmakers decided it was in the best interest of the government and working families to make sure tax dollars are not spent on fly-by-night contractors that pay substandard wages to obtain contracts. So "prevailing wage" standards are set by scientific surveys of actual wages paid in local communities, and anyone awarded a government contract must pay at least those prevailing wages. Numerous studies

have shown that contracting with reputable contractors and paying prevailing wages actually leads to better outcomes and cost savings over time.

Congressman

Baird believes it is vital that the Davis-Bacon framework remain intact and he has vowed keep fighting to preserve this proven provision. Congressman Baird has repeatedly fought to preserve Davis Bacon protection, including in the Water Resources Development Act and in response to Hurricane Katrina.

Preventing the Loss of Manufacturing Jobs

Congressman Baird is deeply concerned by the loss of American manufacturing jobs and believes that we need to do more to protect American jobs.

That is why he is a cosponsor of the Decent Working Conditions and Fair Competition Act. This important legislation would ban the importation or sale of products made in factories under sweatshop conditions.

Congressman Baird also thinks that Congress and the President should review all U.S. trade agreements to ensure our trading partners are complying with those agreements. To that end, Congressman Baird believes our government must:

- Review China's World Trade Organization (WTO) accession agreement, to ensure full compliance by our trading partners.
- Press our Asian trading partners to stop manipulating their currencies to gain trade advantages.
- Support tax advantages for U.S. manufacturers that produce goods domestically and repeal tax breaks that encourage U.S. companies that incorporate overseas.
- Refuse to sign future trade agreements which lack the International Labor Organization core labor standards and stringent environmental protections.
- Ensure foreign governments do not violate trade obligations by unfairly subsidizing their exports to the U.S.
- Strengthen technical education for our students in vocational schools and community colleges and provide training for workers who have been displaced by foreign trade.

Congressman Baird also believes that we need to enact a meaningful mechanism for enforcing the labor provisions of our existing trade agreements. He is currently authoring legislation to create a Trade

Preference Enforcement Commission to oversee the enforcement of worker rights provisions in trade agreements.

Raising the Minimum Wage

Congressman Baird believes that workers in this country should earn a living wage that can support a family. Unfortunately, under the federal minimum wage, employees who work 40 hours a week would earn only \$10,712 a year, an income that is \$2,600 below the poverty level for a family of three.

That is why Congressman Baird was a cosponsor of the Fair Minimum Wage Act. This legislation gradually raises the minimum wage from \$5.15 an hour to \$7.25 an hour over 26 months. In 2007, this important legislation was passed by the House and Senate and signed into law.

Protecting the Wages and Benefits of Workers

Every American deserves a decent wage and a secure retirement after a lifetime of hard work. That is why Congressman Baird has supported several measures to protect the wages and retirement security of Americans and ensure that workers receive what they have been promised.

He cosponsored the Fairness and Accountability in Reorganizations Act. This legislation would close loopholes that have allowed companies to cut the wages and benefits of workers and protect those of executives after declaring bankruptcy. The legislation would require executive bonus packages to be approved by the bankruptcy court. The legislation would also require the debtor company's foreign assets when determining whether or not to modify its existing collective bargaining agreement or modify retiree health benefits. Some international corporations struggling domestically use their losses at home to justify breaking contracts with their employees while their overall company is still thriving.

Congressman Baird cosponsored the Pension Fairness and Full Disclosure Act, which would prohibit corporations from increasing executive retirement plans for five years after declaring bankruptcy in order to avoid their pension costs. Companies with under-funded pension plans would not be allowed to fund executive pensions until rank-and-file plans are at least 75 percent funded. The bill also requires full disclosure before pension plans can be frozen, cut, or terminated.

Congressman Baird also drafted an amendment to the Pension Protection Act which would have prohibited CEO's from personally cashing in on mergers and acquisitions while simultaneously slashing their worker's pensions.

Meeting the Demand for Skilled Workers

Congressman Baird remains wholeheartedly committed to the belief that U.S. workers are capable of meeting the long-term demand for highly skilled workers. Career and Technical Education provides opportunities for students to apply their learning in relevant, real world situations. It helps students acquire the employability and leadership skills that will enable them to succeed both in the workplace and in higher education. In recognition of this, Congressman Baird founded the Congressional Career and Technical Education Caucus. This Caucus works to increase awareness of the importance of career and technical education in Congress, supports funding and resources, and promotes legislation that benefits career and technical education.

It is clear that there is a growing demand for skilled workers in America. Career and technical education programs address this need by focusing education and job training skills in those areas with the greatest need. In fact, according to the Bureau of Labor Standards' projections, 8 of out of the top 10 occupations with the largest job growth through 2014 will require an associate's degree or career and technical training. In preparing for a well-educated and skilled workforce in America, career and technical education is crucial in providing youth and adults with the skills they need in a competitive global economy.

Congressman Baird also believes that we cannot, and should not, ignore the fact that each foreign skilled worker hired by a U.S. employer means the loss of a potential job for a U.S. worker. Congressman Baird believes that U.S. companies that hire foreign skilled workers under an H-1B visa should do their part to increase the number of skilled workers from the United States. That is why he has introduced legislation to require employers who hire foreign skilled workers to participate in programs that provide domestic workers with the education, training and mentoring they need to compete for high-tech jobs.

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